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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*Socialism being one of the most important subjects of to-day, its opponents and supporters alike need a frank, precise, and absolutely authentic account of its aim and methods. The Publisher wishes by means of this series to put clearly before the public a complete conspectus of the present policy of the English Socialists and the Independent Labour Party. To ensure authority and precision, arrangements have been made with the acknowledged leaders, in action and thought, of the new movement to contribute volumes to the "Labour Ideal" series on those branches of Socialism with which they are particularly connected.*

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“ Nay, in some far-away and yet undreamt-of hour, I can even imagine that England may cast all thoughts of possessive wealth back to the barbaric nations among whom they first arose ; and that, while the sands of the Indus and adamant of Golconda may yet stiffen the housings of the charger, and flash from the turban of the slave, she, as a Christian mother, may at last attain to the virtues and the treasures of a Heathen one, and be able to lead forth her Sons, saying—

‘ These are MY Jewels.’ ”

JOHN RUSKIN, *Unto this Last.*

# THE SOCIALIST AND THE CITY

## CHAPTER I

### SOCIALISTS—AND OTHERS

To avoid misunderstanding, I will say at once that I have no intention of trying to put before the reader my idea of a Socialist Utopia; it would be sheer impertinence on my part to attempt such a thing.

Not to mention famous writers long since dead, such as Plato and Sir Thomas More, at least two brilliant men who have lived in our time—William Morris and Edward Bellamy—have given to the world their conception of how life may be lived, and what may be accomplished, under ideal conditions, as they defined them.

To the list of such works additions are being made from time to time by writers well qualified for the purpose. Mine, however, is the more prosaic task of writing, as clearly as I am able, some account of the new

conditions which Socialists are endeavouring to establish at as early a date as public opinion will permit.

For, be it observed, that however much the earnest seeker after a new social order, based on goodwill and fellowship, may be inspired or influenced by the vision of a transformed society such as he thinks possible and right, the general public is not moved by the same influence to any great extent. It is the next step only to which the majority can see their way, and hence such ideas as we may have of a future near enough for us to live in, must shape themselves in some sort of conformity with the institutions and customs amid which we now find ourselves.

In time to come there may be a generation of some race capable of adopting a new social system according to plan—jumping into it, so to speak; but this generation of the British race shows no sign of effecting necessary changes in that way. The future must grow out of the present; it cannot be created to fit with a plan.

The Socialist, in the city life of to-day, is painfully trying, amidst many difficulties and much misunderstanding, unfortunately accompanied also by a considerable amount of misrepresentation, to change the municipal institutions at present in existence, to extend their scope and add to their number, so as

to bring them into harmony with the social gospel which he preaches in accordance with his convictions.

He cherishes his ideals because they help him to decide which way true progress lies, but the necessity for carrying public opinion with him at every step confines his power within very narrow limits. Sometimes the Socialist municipal reformer is inclined to chafe at the limitations which the indifference of public opinion imposes upon his activity, since, being himself, at his best, moved by strong conviction, he is naturally impatient of delay. But, being also by conviction a democrat, his inclination to chafe soon gives way to the feeling that on the whole it is better so, because progress much in advance of the public opinion of the day rests on a very unsafe foundation; the London electorate has recently given a powerful reminder of that fact to all concerned.

As I recognise these considerations, with all their attendant limitations—as well as my own limitations, which are such as would prevent me attempting a more imaginative statement—I must, in speaking of Socialism and its relation to city government, confine myself to—I will not say the immediate, but I trust I may say the not long deferred—objects of Socialist work in municipal life, within limits suggested by observation, guided by experience. In a word, I will try to point

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out what a number of Socialist councillors, finding themselves in a majority on a town or city council, would at once set themselves to do.

In considering the possibilities of city development on Socialist lines, it is necessary to state the object for which city government—in the view of the Socialist—exists, and to ask ourselves whether others, who are not Socialists, seek the same object; and if so, what it is that separates us in municipal affairs.

A large section of the inhabitants of any city are, at present, unfortunately, unconscious of any object; so far as they are concerned the growth of the city and the development of its institutions have no significance whatever—no story to tell.

Fortunately, however, there are in all parties men and women who are moved to action by thought and definite desire, and these are responsible for nearly all that is good in city life. To a certain extent the thoughtful section just referred to are at one as to the objects of municipal corporations, but they are sharply divided as to the methods by which the objects sought should be attained.

The machinery of city government exists for the purpose of ministering to the health, convenience, and well-being of its inhabitants; thoughtful people generally agree so far. When, however, we attempt to secure these very desirable objects, we separate; the

Socialist is in one camp, and those who for want of a better word must be described as individualists, are in the other. In actual practice the individualist, so-called, accepts certain established services that are Socialistic in principle. He accepts them because they exist, and because he cannot deny the benefit the community derives from them, but his predecessors resisted their establishment, and he is opposed to further extensions of the same principle.

As for the Socialist—his position is more clearly defined. He believes that the public should own and manage every service which provides for the common good. He believes that all should co-operate to supply their common needs, rather than leave the work of providing for those needs to the chance operations of the conflicting interests of individuals, whose sole object is the making of profit.

So far as his influence extends in public affairs it is clear, therefore, that it will be exercised in the direction of increasing the number and value of public possessions. The health, happiness, and well-being of the community can only, in his opinion, be attained in that way. Private enterprise has failed in the domain of municipal life. It has driven the people into ugly, inconvenient, jerry-built dwellings. It provides adulterated food in such quantities that numerous officials have to

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be maintained by the public for its detection, and even these it will corrupt if it can.

Where the provision of water, light, and transit is left to private enterprise, charges are heavy, the service as a rule is bad, and the men employed work long hours for low wages. There may be much vague feeling amongst the members of the public that the conditions under which men are called upon to work are unjust; and it may be, and generally is, acknowledged that the chief concern of competing firms, catering for the requirements of the community, is not the public welfare, but dividends and profit, yet the public conscience cannot be brought to bear on those responsible, and, except in cases where the law is actually broken, the offenders cannot be reached.

The Socialist believes that in extending the area of municipal co-operation he is making it possible for the best and most thoughtful elements in the community to exercise a powerful influence in favour of the production of sound goods, and honest description of the same; whilst unjust conditions of work, and low wages, are far less likely to remain the lot of the worker when he has the public conscience to appeal to, instead of a managing director whose sole business it is to make dividends for his shareholders; or a private firm, actuated generally by motives of personal gain.

For these and other reasons, the Socialist seeks at every opportunity to replace private competitive enterprise by public co-operative ownership. To a certain extent Town and City Councils offer him opportunities in this direction, and these, in his capacity as public representative on such bodies, he uses, within the scope of the Municipal Corporations Act, to the best of his ability. As I have said, he is restrained in his efforts by the difficulty of carrying the public with him, and I may also add, his best attempts are often brought to destruction by the wrecking policy adopted by other representatives, who use their position, not to extend the power and influence of municipal life, but to limit its functions to the mere protection of life and property, in the purely legal sense.

## CHAPTER II

### ELECTIONS, REPRESENTATIVES, AND OFFICIALS

THOSE who have searched the records of the past tell us, that so far from the Municipal Corporations Act being the source of the power of self-government now exercised by the people through municipal institutions, the Act in question sets limits to that power which did not exist previously.

Such local bodies as existed prior to the passing of that Act had great freedom as to the scope of their activities, and whoever exercised in those days the rights of citizenship, did so in accordance with democratic customs that had their beginning so many centuries before, that their origin is now more or less obscure. The difficulty of taking away democratic rights of such long standing may account for the otherwise strange fact that Parliament, which even yet is undemocratic in the methods of conducting its own business, when it passed the Municipal Corporations Act above mentioned, put into it a system of self-government which it has since shown no disposition to extend or repeat.

It is a fact worth noting that in all recent cases where Parliament has changed the method of control over—or instituted a new body for the purpose of controlling—any public service, it has taken the opportunity of incorporating some non-elected element if it has been possible to do so.

The Education Committees constituted under the Education Act of 1902, and the Distress Committees established under the Unemployed Workmen's Act, 1905, are instances of the kind that readily occur to one's mind. Even the great Act of 1888, which gave the counties their present system of government, whilst it did not attempt to impose on the new bodies any non-elected element, except that it gave them the doubtful blessing of aldermen, as the Municipal Corporations Act had done for the towns—by a Lords' amendment it is interesting to note—did not give powers equal in scope to those given more than fifty years before, to the municipal corporations.

The people have great power over city government, if they care to exercise it. For the building up of the city of the future most of the machinery is ready to hand. It is locked up in certain of its parts by restrictions placed upon it by Parliament, but there is still great scope for further development, if, and when, the people care to act.

The great drawback is indifference, which

the Socialist fears more than anything else in municipal life. He is sympathetically glad when a big percentage has polled at an election, even if the result is not in his favour, because he knows that indifference is, even more than opposition, the enemy of progress. Indeed, it is one of the Socialist's proudest claims to the consideration of the thinking public that, so far as municipal life is concerned, the Labour and Socialist movement has, during the last fifteen years, added considerably to the percentage of voters exercising the franchise at municipal elections.

It is by no means uncommon, in the North of England towns, where the Labour and Socialist movement is strong, for seventy-five to eighty-five per cent. of the total number of persons entitled to vote, to exercise their right at a municipal election, and that in some towns where, previously, not much interest was taken in local affairs. The same, however, cannot be said of the elections under the Poor Law, in which, if twenty-five to thirty-five per cent. of the electors vote it is considered a good poll, and in far too many cases there is no contest at all.

It used to be the same at the School Board elections when education was administered by bodies separately elected for the purpose. There is danger in such a state of affairs, and that is one reason why Socialists seek to bring the administration of the Poor Law under the

control of the municipality. This is not the only reason nor the most important, but it is a momentous one nevertheless.

Whether it is that the public cannot be induced to vote for Poor Law Guardians because they are thought to be of insufficient consequence, or whether it is the mere frequency of elections which causes the indifference, it is hard to say ; probably both reasons operate to a certain extent.

It appears likely that as time goes on Poor Law administration will become less important. There is a general demand for the separation of the Poor Law Hospital from the Workhouse system ; already Parliament has empowered the Education Committees of Town, City, and County Councils to provide meals for school children ; a national system of pensions for the aged is promised, which will further diminish the importance of Poor Law work. A law has also been passed dealing with the unemployed workman, the administration of which has been specially provided for, and every extension of the principle on which the Act is founded will encroach further on the Poor Law system.

Everything seems to tend in the direction of the unification of Local Government. One body, elected to do all local public work, will prevent confusion and command the attention of a larger proportion of the public. It would be easily possible, were it thought advisable,

to divide the body so elected in such a way as to enable the members to devote themselves exclusively to one branch. The voters might elect their representatives for definite purposes if necessary; each Council might consist of three sections, one to deal with Education, one with Hospitals and Relief, and the other, and much larger section, with ordinary business such as municipal corporations were formed to carry on.

The ballot papers could be separately ruled to show the vacancies in each section, and the candidates for the same. It is doubtful, however, whether there is any advantage to be gained by separating the members of a public body on the assumption that public representatives should be specialists; but rather it is likely that every useful purpose would be served if the total number of members were large enough to allow a restriction to be enforced on each, limiting him to service on a very small number of committees.

Any candidate who has ability sufficient to justify his election to take part in city government is quite competent to take his part in the administration of any branch of it. There is a clear division between the duties of a representative and those of an expert, which is frequently overlooked. The expert is the officially appointed person paid for his special ability for certain definite work; it is his duty to advise the representatives, who should be

impartial judges of the advice he offers. The representative who poses as a departmental specialist takes away the responsibility from the expert official, and is in a privileged position which enables him to carry his own schemes and plans to the exclusion, sometimes, of better ones.

As often as not the amateur expert is a faddist, and if he be allowed to rule as an administrator there is no check on his fads. A builder is the last man who should be appointed chairman of a building committee; and no more unfortunate person could be selected to administer an electricity department than an amateur electrician.

Industry, honesty of purpose, capacity to see the essential features of a case and to explain them to others, the power to transfer the mind freely from one problem to another —these are the faculties indispensable to the public representative in the administrative work he is called upon to do; and they are faculties which, in most cases, cannot be acquired if the mind is kept working in one groove.

A question naturally arises as to whether industrious persons possessing these qualities can be obtained without fee or reward. Happily, it has been proved, over and over again, that given the opportunity, the best men will give of their best with no thought of payment, but they have not always the

opportunity. The business of city government is becoming so vast that it is no longer possible to conduct it properly unless a proportion of the elected representatives are prepared to devote themselves exclusively to it. In Germany, where the development of the city is far more carefully attended to than in this country, men who hold positions similar to that of the mayor of a city, or the chairman of a committee, are paid.

We, on the contrary, expect that men can always be found who will not only devote their time freely to public work, but, indirectly, pay large sums for the privilege. In many cases we get what we expect—thanks to human nature being so much better than it is often represented to be; but too frequently we get what we deserve—men who take public positions for ornamental or other reasons. Nor is it well that the public in choosing its administrators should be restricted to those who have spent the best years of their lives in the pursuit of their own fortunes, or those who are still in business and can only spare a fraction of the time necessary for their public duties. It is even worse when men still in business, whose interests conflict with the development of the town's business, and property owners, fearful lest they should be made to do their duty at some cost to themselves, are the only available candidates from which the electors may choose.

It is probable that were the holders of the most onerous and responsible posts in the local councils of big cities allowed salaries, the calls on the remaining members could be reduced to such purpose that men of all stations could freely offer themselves for election. If so, well and good, but if not, then the situation should be boldly faced. It seems essential that those who are appointed to posts of special responsibility and importance, which demand their whole attention, should be paid; but as pay must not be the first consideration, the amount in each case need not be large. No good work is to be got for mere pay, but it is folly to limit the area from which we draw men to fill important public offices to such as are in a position to dispense with it altogether.

## CHAPTER III

### LOYAL SERVICE

THE successful management of the affairs of any public body depends largely on the ability and fidelity of its officials, and the more nearly we approach to the Socialist city the greater is the necessity for good officials. As the scope of municipal activity extends, greater demands are made on the ability and enterprise of the individuals in charge. Generally, it may be said that the municipal councils in this country are served by men of great capacity, most of whom are equal to the new requirements. A few, however, belonging to a past generation, and appointed when the current ideas of the functions of a municipal council were more restricted than they have since become, fail to meet the added responsibilities that are being laid upon them, and to these the opponents of Socialism point, as evidence in support of their case. The responsibility for these failures rests chiefly with the anti-Socialist administrators who appointed them, in many instances, through favouritism.

It is, however, but a temporary difficulty, and is rapidly passing away, for the standard of efficiency which the public expects its paid officials to meet, becomes, year by year, more searching, and the position of the careless inefficient official more and more untenable, between the devil of public opinion and the deep sea of new responsibilities. As for the new generation of officials, they are almost uniformly good, if one may so express it without offence to the old ones, of whom, as I have said, the majority are good also.

It is but natural that the best managers, experts, and officials should be found in the public service, for it offers advantages that private employment cannot give, not the least being its practical permanency—during good behaviour; so that if the salary be lower than in private employment, as it often is, there is less risk of losing it.

In the Socialist city, officials, instead of being scoffed at, as too often they have been, will be respected; while credit will be given them freely for the services they render, they will be expected to take pride in their work. Salaries must be liberal enough to attract the best men to the public service, though, for reasons already given, they need not be on the same scale as the more precarious earnings of professional men outside.

It is no part of the Socialist plan to run municipal concerns under the control of the

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managerial leavings of private enterprise, for that way disaster lies. But, at the same time, it will be the duty of the Socialist administrators of the future to fix the relations between the paid official and the public on a fairer basis than they rest upon at present. Some means must be adopted to secure greater loyalty on the part of officials who to-day often transfer their services from one public authority to another, almost regardless of the responsibilities they leave behind them, in the shape of unfinished projects involving large sums of money. Advantage is taken of the fact that the large municipal corporations are anxious to secure possession of the best men, and lesser corporations often advance salaries in order to retain their officials, only to find that still greater pecuniary attractions draw them away in the end.

At present all the larger corporations are trying to monopolise for their own service a number of experts insufficient to go round ; the result is that some of them are paying first-class salaries for second or third-class men. There will be no need for this when cities cease to compete with each other, and one may naturally expect that Socialist cities would abolish this last vestige of competition still remaining between different municipal corporations. In most other respects they are inclined towards mutual helpfulness ; and we may reasonably expect that in the future all

the cities will jointly benefit by the services of the best men for whom they now compete, by employing them as consultants.

The associated corporations will be able to pay sufficiently large salaries, and each individual corporation requiring a specialist's assistance might pay consultation fees into a common pool. Joint action in this direction will tend to steady the movements of experts and officials; and for the rest, it should be looked upon as a discreditable proceeding on the part of a man, holding, say, a responsible post as engineer, surveyor, architect, or other similar profession, to transfer his services after committing the community to some large scheme involving great outlay, until the work is sufficiently near completion for the responsibility to be properly placed in case of failure.

## CHAPTER IV

### PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF LAND

EVERY sovereign of public money spent on the improvement of the conditions of town life goes in part to the landlord in the shape of increased land values. If a tract of land on the outskirts of a growing town is made more freely accessible by the corporation tramway there is at once induced thereby a demand for living accommodation which did not previously exist, and up goes the price of land in consequence. As building operations proceed, and new schemes are contemplated, new public thoroughfares have to be made, and expensive systems of drainage must be carried out.

To give better access to the business parts of the town, and relieve the congestion of traffic, old property is purchased, and pulled down at the expense of the community. Each new influx of population into a district, whether induced by conveniences and services provided at the public expense, or by the enterprising activity of the inhabitants of the town generally, gives additional income, in

the shape of increased rent, to those who own the land.

It is true that, as a ratepayer, the owner of land himself meets a *portion* of the public charges, but nothing approaching *proportion* to the benefits he obtains in return.

To make matters worse, the owners of land, in many cases, deliberately decline to allow it to be put to its proper uses, until the pressure of population has forced up the price to a point agreeing with his demands. If the land is well in the public view, the owner will possibly obtain a small interest on its capital value by surrounding it with an advertisement hoarding; if it be on the fringe of the town he will let it for some semi-agricultural purpose, and it will be rated accordingly; the rent paid will yield a small interest, and for the rest he waits contentedly until the necessities of the public compel acceptance of his terms.

A consequence of the power held, and fully exercised by the owners of land, is the crowding together of the people under conditions which destroy their physical fitness, encourage immorality, and make it difficult for them to lead clean and wholesome lives.

To the mind of the Socialist the one remedy for such evils of land monopoly is public ownership; he would, at once, put an end to the private holding of land, if that were possible, but such a course would need a drastic change in the laws of the country,

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which could only be made in response to the wishes of the people, who are not yet convinced of its necessity.

In this, therefore, as in other matters, the Socialist must frame his plans in such ways as may be expected to remedy some of the worst features of the present system, and at the same time be in harmony with the object he seeks finally to attain. On one point he is clear, that is, the retention of all land coming into public possession through transactions arising out of the necessity for achieving schemes of public improvement. Once thus possessed, such land, in the opinion of the Socialist, should not be resold. Leased it may properly be, but it must, after a term of years, revert to the community to whom, as having made it, will then belong such increased value as may have accrued in the meantime.

Had this line of action been adopted fifty years ago, most of the towns in the country could now have defrayed all expenditure on public health and maintenance of order out of the additional income derived from the public estates. Many towns, in their corporate capacity, have bought and resold, in the course of their street improvement operations, during the last thirty or forty years, most of the desirable sites abutting on the public roads within their boundaries. They have, at the public cost, made new roads and widened old ones, the land necessary for such purpose,

and more by the side of it, having been purchased at great expense, and in nearly all cases the municipalities have then resold the surplus land abutting on the thoroughfares at prices ridiculously small in comparison with what might have been obtained, had they waited until the improvements had developed.

Had the land been leased to suitable persons, or had property adapted for letting purposes been built upon by the public authorities, not only would the whole cost of the improvement have been recouped in most cases, but there would have often been some surplus.

It is but fair to say, however, that Parliament itself is partly responsible for the mistakes of local authorities in this matter by urging them to sell, and generally making its consent to any project involving the purchase of land, conditional on the resale of such surplus as might remain after the project had been carried out. That it has not invariably taken this stand, however, the experience of Birmingham shows. The corporation of that city, in the days when it was progressive, cleared from a large area the slum dwellings then covering it, planned a magnificent street, and retained the site on which the buildings were subsequently erected.

Fortunately, the present tendency is towards allowing greater freedom to local authorities in these matters, following the example of the

German cities, and we may look for the adoption by an increasing number of towns of a policy which Socialists will do all they can to press upon public bodies with which they are connected. Unlike the central authority in this country, which, as I have said, has disapproved generally of municipalities becoming landowners, the Prussian Government strongly advises all towns to acquire as much land as possible.

As to the price to be paid when the present owners of the land are expropriated in the public interest, Socialists, while recognising the expediency in all, and the justice in some cases, of paying for land, rather than confiscating it, object most strongly to the present methods of purchase. Exorbitant prices are almost invariably paid by public bodies for all the land they buy. When land is separately valued for rating purposes, as will, probably, soon be the case, the responsibility for fixing the price may, to some extent, be placed on the owner himself. If the assessing authority, in estimating the value of a piece of land, places it at too low a figure, the owner, if he takes advantage of the error to escape payment of his fair share of the rates and taxes, should be considered to have approved the valuation; and in the event of the public requiring his land the purchase price should, to some extent, be based on the amount upon which it has been rated and taxed.

It may be freely admitted, however, that working on that line alone, under present circumstances, it is not possible to carry the policy of acquiring land far enough to effect a radical change, and it is necessary, therefore, by some means to arrest the further appropriation of land values, and to limit, in the public interest, the mischievous power of private landowners. In this connection, also, the action taken by continental cities forms a useful precedent for the guidance of the Socialist administrator. The administrators of the German cities have made themselves famous, in recent years, by their careful planning of the course of city extension. Instead of allowing private enterprise to build on the outskirts of the city, on the assumption that the district in which they operate will always be on the outskirts, the German authorities have recognised that cities *grow*. Carelessly planned dwellings, huddled together, which appear harmless enough in the midst of green fields, are slums when the extending city has grown around them. Hence it is the custom now for the German authorities to appoint the best men to be found for the purpose, architects and others, to draw up schemes for developing further building operations, in such a manner as to save the trouble and expense of repeating the mistakes of the past.

With the reports referred to before them the city authorities determine the conditions on

which alone future building operations may be conducted. The lay of the streets, their width, the character of the buildings, the area and disposition of the necessary open spaces, all is arranged ; and, as a result, it is claimed that the growth of land values is to some extent restrained owing to the conditions upon which alone owners may use, or allow others to use, their land. We may safely say that so far as present powers allow them to do so, and to the extent that the central authority could be induced to give them further powers, a body of Socialist councillors, finding itself in a majority, and in a position to guide the policy of a city, would refuse to alienate the land already publicly owned, and would also take action with the object of increasing the area of land held by the city, after the example of the public authorities in Germany.

## CHAPTER V

### RATING OF SITE VALUES

IN the meantime, while the general public remains indifferent to the advantages to be derived from the public ownership of all land, and while, within its limits, the process of piecemeal acquisition is being carried out, what can be done to arrest the appropriation, by private landowners, of the added value given to land by the progress of the population? What can be done to prevent land being held back from its proper uses, for the purpose of influencing its price, or for other reasons? It is at this point that the Socialist comes into agreement with land reformers who are not Socialists. They believe in taxing unearned increments. So does he. They believe in rating unoccupied land, as he does also. The prospective gains that may be expected to follow on the adoption of the new methods of rating may, in the opinion of the Socialist, be somewhat less than is supposed in some quarters, but that there will be gains he admits. He is not of the number of those who affirm that the whole amount of

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additional rates or taxes laid upon the landlord will be transferred by him to the tenant.

The incidence of rates and taxes, as between landlord and tenant, is frequently difficult to determine, on account of cross considerations of a more or less temporary character entering into the calculations, but one or two of the chief advantages which may be expected to accrue from the alteration of the present system of rating land are scarcely open to doubt. The custom now followed, of lumping land and buildings together in one valuation, obscures the operation of rates and taxes as between landlord and tenant, but nothing can upset the conclusion which most Socialists have well in mind—viz., that every extra charge to which the owner of land becomes subject reduces the capital value of the land itself; and if such a charge be an annual one, laid upon the full capital value of all land, whether in use or not, the reduction in values will be general, and be the number of owners many or few, rents will fall. To an intending occupier the land is worth no more than it was previous to the imposition of the new charge upon it, taking rate and rent as one sum; on the other hand the landlord is compelled to take less than before, because even if he insists on withholding the land from its proper use, he himself will have to pay the rate portion. Or to put the case another way, and give it an extreme turn for the sake of

clearness :—to-day, were an intending purchaser willing to give £1000 for a certain plot of land, and were the owner disposed to sell, if to-morrow a rate equal to ten shillings in the pound on the rent the land could command were unexpectedly laid upon it, the same intending purchaser would only give half the amount, £500, and the owner would be willing to sell at the lowest figure, because either he *must* sell or himself put the land to its full use, if he wishes to escape an annual loss equal to the amount of the new charge. Some idea of the extent to which this new pressure would operate if sites were rated at their full value, irrespective of the uses, if any, to which they are put, may be gathered from the following statement.

The central portion of the city in which I live, comprising an area of between 10,000 and 11,000 acres, which is rather less than half the total area, contains about four-fifths of the whole population, and yet, of that area—10,776 acres, to give the exact figures—over 4,500 acres are not built upon. Most of this land is let for some temporary purpose, some is vacant; under present arrangements the rates are based on the rent it is producing: where no use is being made of it no rates are being received, and where a hoarding only occupies the site, the rent of the hoarding is the basis of rating. In cases where the land is let for farming—such farming as is possible

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under the conditions—it is assessed and rated—subject to the deductions allowed by the Public Health Act, and the Agricultural Rating Act—on the rent it is worth for farming purposes.

The owners of land such as I have described have generally no intention of permanently holding it for farming or advertisement purposes, nor of obliging the community by providing it with free open spaces. They are waiting for the demand for housing or other accommodation to become so pressing as to allow them to command the terms of sale.

The community encourages them to act against the public interest in this way by allowing them to pay rates on a fictitious valuation. There is nothing fictitious, however, about the price asked by the owners for their land should the community require any part of it for public purposes. I have one case in mind where the owner of a plot of land demanded eleven shillings per yard for it from the city authorities. The said land was assessed for rating purposes at a gross annual value, which at twenty years' purchase amounted to about 2½d. per yard.

While land is thus being withheld from its proper uses, the people are compelled to crowd unduly the parts which are built upon, or available; they cannot spread themselves as they might, if large patches of land were not, for the time being, closed to them. Were

the land in question permanently to remain uncovered by buildings, one might rejoice, but such is not the case; it *will* be built upon, so soon as the overcrowding of the surrounding land makes it possible for the owner to get his price.

If, on the other hand, site values were rated at their full amount, land would be, at the moment, available for the purposes most pressing. It has been objected that the rating of sites at their full value, and also the taxation of land values, would intensify, instead of relieving, overcrowding, as the cost of open spaces and gardens would be greater than before. The economic answer to this objection appears to be that any intending purchaser, or occupier, who would have been willing to buy, or rent, land for an open space or garden under the old conditions—that is, with no rate on the site value—would be in no worse position in buying, or renting, for the same purpose land which carried a rate on the site value, because in the latter case he could obtain it cheaper, as I tried to explain when referring to the incidence of rating between owner and occupier.

The owner who happens to be in possession at the time the change is made will feel it at first, no doubt, but unless he be a recent purchaser he will be unable to make out a case of even moderate hardship, for he will all along have been crediting himself with values to

which he has no just claim. So much for the economic reply to the objection, which I give believing it to be sound.

But whether the full site value were rated in each case or not, the best way to protect the public against fear of future building operations perpetuating all the old problems—some of which are due to lack of open spaces and insufficient curtilage to each house—is to adopt the German plan described in the previous chapter; to think out the problem, in the first place, from the point of view of the community, and afterwards to insist upon conformity to the conditions found necessary to public welfare, on the part of those who build. As stated in the last chapter—and as one would naturally expect—it is claimed by the German authorities that the result of limiting the number of buildings that may be erected on a given space, and the number of floors in each building—due regard being given to the use for which intended—is to reduce the price of land.

The first thing to be done in dealing with town lands is, as recently stated by Mr. Winston Churchill, to “disentangle site values from buildings and improvements.” Not that it makes any difference in the end as to their relative share of the present rating burden, whether owner or occupier be the actual medium of payment, or whether the value of the land and buildings is placed in one column,

or twenty, in the rate book. The burden, in my opinion, is now shared between the two, in accordance with economic factors, the chief of which relates to the proportional value of land, which is cheapened in price by taxation; and of building materials, and other like things, the production and working up of which may be checked until the price can be raised sufficiently to yield the required return under new conditions.

If, however, there is to be *differential* rating between land and buildings—taxation of land values, in fact—then a separate valuation is an indispensable preliminary.

As a measure by which additional funds for public purposes may be obtained, taxation of land values is right; it does not interfere with production, land being a fixed quantity, and it gives the public the opportunity of taking to itself some of the socially created wealth which now enriches the landowner.

The income tax and the land tax are the two, above all, which commend themselves to the Socialist, when pondering over possible means of providing for social reforms more or less costly.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OVERBURDENED RATEPAYER

IN these days there is a tendency towards allowing the “overburdened ratepayer” to set the limits of municipal progress. In every town and city in the kingdom his complaint is heard. You may prove to him that, pound for pound, the money spent co-operatively through the city corporation buys more than if separately expended by each individual, but feeling that he, personally, is suffering some grievous injustice, he is not open to conviction on the point.

Who *is* the “overburdened ratepayer”? *Has* he any grievance? It is important that we should find out all about him, and specially so to the Socialist. As we have seen in recent municipal contests, the “overburdened ratepayer” is, in some instances, a wealthy private trading company, whose interests conflict with some form of municipal enterprise. Were this the only type of overburdened ratepayer the Socialist had to deal with there would be no need for

alarm—the public would eventually understand its motives, and act accordingly; but there are others concerned who have a genuine grievance. The ratepayer whose business compels him to occupy heavily-assessed premises, but whose income is small, may well be excused for thinking that he is hardly dealt with. The retail trader who is struggling to maintain his foothold against the competition of big stores, co-operative and otherwise; the survivors of "genteel" families, striving vainly to keep themselves afloat by letting their spare rooms, or taking boarders; these, and others in similar case, must be considered. It may be true—I believe it is—that in the end economic forces now shaping themselves will prove too much for the small traders; rates or no rates, their day is rapidly passing. But the acknowledgment of that fact in no way disposes of their present grievance, which, so long as it remains unredressed, will prevent the development of the city from proceeding as swiftly as it otherwise would.

It must, however, be noted, that the complaint of the class of ratepayer referred to is not sound, so far as it is urged against municipal expenditure. There may have been, in the past, lavish extravagance in municipal schemes which were mainly designed to improve the property and develop the estates of wealthy and influential citizens,

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but schemes of that kind cannot now be pushed through without serious public comment as they were formerly. In nearly every community in the land, large or small, there is to-day growing up a civic conscience which is so keenly sensitive in such matters that costly projects can no longer pass in open council meeting, unless they can be defended on their merits.

The grievance of the ratepayer, where it exists, is against the incidence of rating. Rates are charged on premises, and the extent of the premises occupied is by no means a true measure either of the benefits received by a particular ratepayer as a result of public expenditure, or of his ability to bear the burden. Yet both these factors should be kept in view when deciding on the proper system of laying local rates. It seems obvious, for reasons already stated, that sites should be made to bear as much as possible, but it is equally obvious that they cannot bear the whole sum.

Some enthusiastic reformers believe that the whole burden of local rates can be placed upon site values, but a simple examination of the facts will show that to be impossible.

The expenditure in all large towns is already so great as to exceed in amount the total annual value of the land on which the towns are built. It is generally understood

that the approximate value of town land can be ascertained by averaging it as forming one-third of the total assessment of land and buildings. If, pending the institution of a system of separate valuation, we accept that proportion as a rough working estimate, and then reflect that in many large towns the rates are already at, or near, nine shillings in the pound on the annual value of land and buildings together, we must conclude that it is quite impossible to place all the burden of local rates on the land.

Tax it when vacant, or adopt what means you will to render it difficult for land to escape the obligation you would impose upon it, yet the margin of difference between its full annual value and the rates it is assessed to bear will fall on buildings or improvements, and these being made dearer by taxation—not cheaper, as land is—the margin of difference referred to must eventually affect the occupier.

Thus, even under the most rigorous system of taxing town lands, a family would be penalised—though not so much as at present—by additional taxation, for occupying a more commodious and healthy dwelling than others in receipt of similar incomes occupying inferior houses.

Similarly a private trader, making a precarious livelihood out of some branch of business requiring extensive premises, would

be heavily rated in comparison with a professional man, or an agent, needing offices only; though the professional man and the agent may be making each of them, perhaps, thousands a year.

Apart, therefore, from the rates levied on site values, and with the exception of a small additional sum to cover the cost of protecting, not land, but the property resting thereon—such as the guarding against fire and theft by means of fire brigades and police—the remainder of the amount necessary to meet the cost of all public services should be placed on incomes. The city of Berlin is said to raise an annual sum equal to over a million pounds sterling by a municipal income tax.

If the bulk of local taxation were placed on site values and incomes—as much as possible on sites—a much more equitable means of raising municipal funds would be established; the real grievance under which many rate-payers at present suffer would be removed; and it would then become possible, without inflicting injustice on any section of the community, to place on the public funds institutions which are necessary for the public welfare, but which, at present, languish under the spasmodic operation of what is erroneously described as voluntary effort.

Under such a system of providing for the necessary expenditure, it would become possible to satisfy the average person that every

service previously performed by individual householders separately, or catered for by firms—operating either in wasteful competition with each other, or through the power of a virtual monopoly—if accomplished co-operatively, is not only capable of development outside the limits allowed by private ownership and production for profit, but that he—the average person—as a sharer in the common good, is a clear gainer by such co-operative action.

## CHAPTER VII

### TRADING PROFITS AND INTEREST ON CAPITAL

CLOSELY related to the subject of rates and their incidence is the question of the disposal of trading profits. Here again the Socialist is under the necessity of acknowledging the strength of circumstances which, at present, he is unable to control, and of working up to his ideal by such easy stages as he finds possible.

The Socialist view of the fair way of dealing with profits on trading concerns is to have none—if one may be excused so paradoxical a statement. Fair wages and good conditions generally for the employees, and selling at cost, so that all may use freely the commodity or service, is the nearest approach to justice in respect to such municipal concerns as are incapable of being used with equal freedom by all.

In certain matters even the most rabid of theoretic individualists is a communist in practice. Main thoroughfares, bridges, and

other similar things are paid for out of the common purse, and none would dream of separately charging each individual using them; they are so generally and freely used that it would not be worth while to assess the benefits.

Free trams are sometimes advocated, in the mistaken belief that the same principle applies, but that is not the case. It is, in practice, impossible to provide a tramway service so adjusted to the requirements of a large town as to give equal facilities to all, and the only way of dealing fairly is to make a charge covering the cost. Should more than cost be charged? Theoretically no, but actually, for the present, yes!

Theoretically no! Because the service should be established for use and not for profit; otherwise, yes! Because it has been found by experience that some concession must be made to the popular notion that such municipal undertakings as are, in their essential features, trading concerns, should yield a surplus for the common good.

The Socialist recognises the strength of the popular demand, and is prepared to agree to it within certain limits. He has no objection to a reasonable surplus being made on the sale of gas, or electricity, or on receipts from tramway traffic; but instead of such surplus being applied directly to the relief of rates, he would wish it to be used for the extinction of debt,

or towards providing further capital for more municipal trading.

The Socialist objects as strongly to the power exercised by the money-lender as to that wielded by the landowner. The burden of rent is great, the burden of interest is greater; and so far as reasonable profits can be made on the productive undertakings of a municipality and applied to the provision of capital for the city's requirements, not only can indirect relief be given to the ratepayers, but the power of the banks to impose onerous terms on municipal authorities may be lessened. Unfortunately, at present, public bodies must pay heavy tribute as interest on borrowed money, part of which, of course, is employed in productive enterprise, but part also borrowed for purposes which yield no *financial* returns, though giving others no less tangible.

If the reader will take the trouble of examining the accounts of any city or town with which he is familiar, he will, generally speaking, be surprised at the amount of interest paid on borrowed money; and the more enterprising and capable the corporate administrators have been, the greater is the certainty of a big debt.

I have before me as I write, figures showing particulars of the amount of indebtedness and the payments on account of interest, of the city of Bradford for the year ending March 31,

1905. The total amount of debt at that time was £8,016,056. Of this sum the amount borrowed for the financing of productive concerns was £5,421,583, the rest, (£2,594, 473) being debt incurred for making streets and sewers, laying out parks, building schools, hospitals, workhouses, public baths, and all other necessities which constitute the primary purpose of city government.

The total rates at that time amounted to 8s. 4d. in the pound, and interest charges on borrowed money to a sum equal to 4s. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound, or nearly one half of the total rates. If Bradford had either invested the profits from its productive concerns in those concerns, or applied them to the extinction of debt, the financial position would have been vastly different.

The profits from the gas undertaking alone (purchased in 1871), after making ample provision for every financial requirement, including sinking fund, have been drawn upon for the relieving of rates in one form or another to the amount of £923,494.

An objection freely urged against a policy of the kind here suggested is, that by investing available profits, instead of applying them to the relief of rates, an injustice is being done to the present generation for the benefit of posterity; and the regard shown for the claims of posterity in some quarters is illustrated by the oft-quoted indignant inquiry, ascribed to some

“city father” of the self-made brand, “What has posterity done for me?”

In my opinion the course I am suggesting would not involve any sacrifice for the sake of future generations, on the part of the mass of the present generation ; profits invested as I advise might properly be used for objects of public utility, and every £100 of its own capital thus used would represent £100 worth of freedom from that most costly of all modern parasites, the banker.

How much more effective use may be made of municipal profits by applying them in the manner suggested, the following illustration will show. The municipal corporation of some town or city where a penny rate produces, say, £5000, which is near the sum one may expect when the population is about 250,000, has, on the working, say, of its gas undertaking, after providing renewals, or depreciation and sinking fund, a surplus of £10,000. Such a surplus applied to the relief of rates would reduce them to the extent of 2d. in the pound, a sum that would scarcely be noticed by the majority of ratepayers ; but were the £10,000 invested in corporate property, at 4 per cent. interest, it would, in the period covered by one generation, *i.e.* thirty years, yield for the community £22,453, and the £10,000 would still remain.

A steady policy of this kind, carried out over a series of years by a municipality

owning prosperous productive undertakings, would materially improve its credit, and in so doing would enrich the inhabitants far more than would the piecemeal distribution of its profits.

More heroic measures, the propounders of which appear to disregard some of the most important difficulties of municipal and general finance, are recommended for adoption by municipal authorities to meet their financial requirements. Without doubt, if cities were self-contained, and had few transactions outside their own borders, a municipal credit note might be as serviceable as a Bank of England note; but cities are *not* self-contained, and it would be perfectly easy for a combination of interests to ruin the credit of any municipal authorities who might be tempted to indulge in dangerous experiments. Credit notes would be of little use were the city's credit gone, because people would be afraid to take them. However valuable the assets of a municipal authority might be—and municipal concerns are usually far more substantial and sound than banking companies are—it is public confidence that constitutes the first requisite, and this it is the duty of all reformers to establish and maintain against the assaults of those whose interest it is to break it down.

The institution of Municipal Savings Banks, under the protection of, and subject to inspection by, the State, would assist public

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authorities and render them less dependent on the bankers; then when people had become accustomed to thinking their city's credit at least equal to that of the leading banks, a limited issue of notes might be allowed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EDUCATION

“You must forget your money, and every material interest, and educate for education’s sake only ; or the very good you try to bestow will become venomous, and that, and your money will be lost together.”  
—JOHN RUSKIN, *Time and Tide*.

IN no department of public affairs is the difference between various schools of thought so marked as in that of education. The commercial man, and others, who desire the maintenance of the present industrial relations between man and man, and nation and nation, look upon schools, and educational institutions generally, as valuable chiefly for the training of efficient workmen, and capable organisers in the domain of industry and commerce.

Platform and press unite in calling upon the nation to awake, and to educate its youth with the object of beating the foreigner in the race for wealth. This is not the Socialist’s view of the purpose of education ; believing that

no useful system can be thus founded, he rejects such appeals in favour of the truer ideals of men with a more liberal conception of human needs.

What are these human needs? They comprise the physical, the mental, and the moral; and the school system must take account of all three. First, as to the physical basis. The Socialist believes that the primary concern of the city authorities in relation to school children, is to see that they are given every opportunity of growing up physically fit to enjoy, and make the best of, life. Recent investigations prove that a large percentage of school children suffer from causes which, if taken in time, could be easily remedied. A few of the larger cities have appointed school doctors who have made public facts, justifying the demand voiced for years by the Socialists, that school authorities should make their first concern the physical condition of the children they are supposed to educate —*i.e.* to train bodily and mentally. The state of affairs discovered by these school doctors, especially amongst the children of the poor, is deplorable. Dr. Arkle, of Liverpool, gives particulars of nearly 2500 scholars; particulars of such a character as to cause him to supplement them by remarking, "One cannot fail to be startled—I had almost said appalled—at the unanimity of the results, and the

clearness with which they indicate a very terrible state of affairs."

In support of his conclusion that under-feeding and neglect are chiefly responsible for this "terrible state of affairs," he compares the children whose condition he thus describes, with other children drawn from a similar class but fed and cared for in an industrial school for twelve months, or longer; and finds that good food and careful attention had given the industrial school children a great advantage in physique over the children of the ordinary schools.

Dr. Crowley, of Bradford, after an examination of 2000 scholars, estimates that 13 per cent. of the children in the Bradford schools are seriously underfed, and that the state of nutrition of 33 per cent. is below normal. Dr. Kerr, Medical Officer of the London County Council's Education Committee, tells us that of the diseases incidental to school life—viz., measles, scarlet fever, and diphtheria—the last named can be prevented; and the second, scarlet fever, to some extent controlled.

In view of the facts already ascertained, it is no longer possible to deny the necessity for medical inspection of school children, and it is certain that as a result of such inspection, other needs will be made manifest. Then, too, if it be necessary to maintain a

staff at Whitehall, to report as to the manner in which other branches of educational work are being carried on, it is even more necessary to establish there a medical department, to collect information as to the work done by school doctors, estimate its value, and encourage its development on new and promising lines.

Every child on entering school should be examined, and its physical condition set forth on a form prepared for the purpose. Examination, if by the school doctor, should be free, but parents should have the option of choosing their own doctor. Thorough inspection, such as here indicated, would establish the need for school baths, provision of meals, and for medical assistance, where, owing to home circumstances, the required treatment did not follow on the discovery of ailments.

As to the provision of meals, to the number at least of one a day, this should be general, for educational reasons, if for no other. There is no denying the educational value of the common meal, served in cleanly and orderly fashion, to children whose parents, overworked, or lacking training, never thus provide one at home. Habits of mutual forbearance, helpfulness, and courtesy can be quietly and effectively cultivated at the common table, and the taste for well-cooked food,

otherwise not appreciated, would be acquired by all.

Should these meals be free? In the sense that elementary education is free already, yes; which really means that the benefits of organisation and of co-operative catering will be utilised, and the cost shared amongst all, according to their means, for in no other sense is any public service free.

The schools, and the meals, should be available for all alike. So far as possible all children should go through the elementary schools irrespective of their circumstances. There should be no separate class of schools supported by the public, in which parents who can afford to pay may be allowed to monopolise the best teachers, and make their children of a caste apart from others.

While higher education should be retained, not for those who can pay for it, but for those who can appreciate and use it, all alike should go through the ordinary elementary schools. If any parents choose to insist on their children being educated as a class apart, they should themselves bear the whole cost, and the only entrance to schools provided by the public for higher education, should be through primary schools open to all.

At present the supply of teaching ability of all grades other than elementary is unequal to the demand, as it will be for some time; and

what there is of it should not be, as now, almost monopolised by a class. Moreover, while rich and poor still exist it is not well that they should be unknown to each other; one may well believe that the evils following on poverty and dirt will have their causes more swiftly removed when the rich man's—equally with the poor man's—child risks disease and other similar blessings that are now carried from the slums to the schools. If the sympathy which might conceivably be promoted by fellowship failed to operate as I think it would, then in all probability a healthy sense of common danger would lead to the improvement of housing and other bad conditions.

Secondly, as to mental training. Is it a thing apart from the physical, or should it be, in accordance with Kropotkin's formula, "through the eyes and the hand to the brain"? Emphatically we are with Kropotkin! Should the object of educationalists be to teach graded individuals, some to work with their hands, and others to think and plan; thus assuming previous knowledge of the special aptitudes of such individuals: or should the object be rather so to combine working and thinking as to develop the intelligence of all? By the latter method alone, in our opinion, can life and work be made pleasurable to

all; and what is more, in that way only can the nation get its working and thinking done well.

The union of theory and practice would elevate craftsmanship to a higher level than is possible while the two are separated. The object of the teacher should be to train the mind of each pupil to conceive, plan, and execute—not one to conceive and plan, and another to execute. In that way the community may discover, without serious loss, the differing abilities of its citizens for the rendering of special service. All, at least, would have learnt to work intelligently, and some would be spared the awful experience of pursuing a calling in which, despite all opportunities of perfecting themselves, nature had made success impossible. If work were the basis of their education, many who under the present system of specialisation can find no place in the world, might fill one, with credit, as craftsmen.

And lastly, as to moral training, which I do not so place as the last to be thought of. It must run through the whole period of school life, and if successful, will not end there. Long after one's limbs lose the spring of youth and the strength of manhood, when the mind is incapable of further development, moral discipline may still proceed, and the sun of life may increase in brightness as it

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goes down in the west. And, to my mind, no syllabus can be made to fit this training. It will, and must, depend chiefly on the power of the teacher to impress by example.

And now, though I am well aware that some of the opinions expressed here would have troubled the spirit of that great moral teacher, John Ruskin; yet I venture to commend to all engaged in the sacred duty of training the young, the following passage, enunciating in words no man may improve on, that which his own inherent worth fully entitled him to declare.

“Reverence then, and compassion, we are to teach primarily; and with these, as the bond and guardian of them, truth of spirit and word, of thought and sight. Truth earnest and passionate, sought for like a treasure, and kept like a crown.

“This teaching of truth as a habit will be the chief work the master has to do; and it will enter into all parts of education. First, you must accustom the children to close accuracy of statement; this both as a principle of honour and as an accomplishment of language, making them try always who shall speak truest, both as regards the fact he has to relate or express (not concealing or exaggerating) and as regards the precision of the words he expresses it in, thus making truth (which indeed it is) the test of perfect language, and

giving the intensity of a moral purpose to the study of words; then carrying this accuracy into all habits of thought and observation also, so as always to *think* of things as they truly are, as far as in us rests." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, *Time and Tide*.

## CHAPTER IX

### PUBLIC HEALTH

THE public health question is mainly a housing question, as to which the Socialist view is definite, and well known to all who have taken the trouble to inquire.

It is all a matter of shortage of supply, which, from the public health point of view, may exist, even while there are many unlet houses in the city; because those available, and a still larger number, unfortunately tenanted, are not in the least fitted for occupation.

Indeed, I know of no town or city without a serious scarcity of housing accommodation, and people can only delude themselves into thinking otherwise by taking it for granted that of existing houses the majority are as they should be, which is far from being the case.

If the health of the people were really our first consideration, as by sheer force of habit we accustom ourselves to think it, then

probably 25 per cent. of the present dwellings—in any town not of recent growth, and perhaps in others also—would have to be superseded, and in all probability another 25 per cent. would only be deemed fitting homes for the people after improvement by considerable alteration.

Consistently with my original intention, as mentioned at the beginning of this book, I refrain from indulging in flights of fancy on this subject, as on others already dealt with, or I might have suggested a delightful scheme of rebuilding my city on Garden City lines, every detail prearranged and mapped out, to be materialised on a new site.

Such a scheme, after all the thought given to the subject in recent years, might win the approval of a section of the public, others would criticise and show a better way—on paper; a larger number would be simply indifferent.

To existing cities neither the possibilities of such a scheme nor its probable reception is of much importance, however, because in dealing with the question of existing cities, this Bradford if you will, where I now write, one must come down to bare, cold facts, accepting the situation as it is, and fitting one's ideals to reality as best one may.

And what are the facts? Roughly these: that the bulk of the working classes live in houses in which it is almost impossible to maintain or acquire habits of personal cleanliness; that many thousands of these houses are of the back-to-back type, with no through ventilation, and with conveniences shared by a number of householders in common. At their best such places are insanitary; at their worst they are slums: many of the occupiers do not make the best of circumstance, and in a small proportion of cases cleanliness and tidiness are not even attempted. Such cases, under the system of joint usage of yards and conveniences, have disastrous effect. Mrs. A. litters the yards with refuse, but will not do her share of the necessary cleaning. Sooner or later, Mrs. B. wearies of doing Mrs. A.'s work in addition to her own, and thus demoralisation spreads itself. The children play over the foul gutters, or within a few yards of ashpits, or privy middens, and during the hot weather are carried off in large numbers by diarrhoea. Swarms of flies in summer keep up a connection between the privy midden and the household table.

Well-to-do people are in the habit of blaming the poor for their slovenly habits, but one wonders whether, under similar circumstances, such critics would do better. Not only is

personal cleanliness almost impossible in a house where there can be no privacy, but the ordinary duties of the mother are rendered thrice as heavy as they should be, because the one room, in which the family sit, eat, and read if they will, is also the only place for baking, washing, and preparation of meals, and is consequently, and usually, in a chaotic condition.

Having regard to the kind of housing accommodation now available for the ordinary working-class population, in the towns and cities of England, it is not to be wondered at that the infantile mortality and general death-rate is usually twice as heavy in working-class districts as elsewhere. I do not say that this difference is due to housing conditions alone. Improper and insufficient feeding, and the contamination of the milk supply have much to do with the present heavy rate of infantile mortality; and conditions of labour, as also personal habits, increase the adult death-rate: but it is agreed by the best authorities on public health, that the housing problem is the main factor to be considered.

Neither do I infer that the back-to-back houses I have mentioned are common in most towns, but in one form or another their equivalent is to be found in all. In Scotland, as in London, one sees the tenement

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dwellings, which, unless carefully designed and the number of occupants strictly limited, are even worse than the back-to-back houses.

One has here to consider in what way would a Socialist majority, supposing it to exist, deal with present conditions. The first step would be to increase the supply of suitable dwellings; the next, to make more rigorous the terms on which alone houses now occupied might remain so. By erecting new habitations on the outskirts of the city, an effort would be made to draw the population away from the crowded centres. Careful consideration would be given to the requirements of the workers, in deciding on the type of house to be built, not with the idea of confining their occupation to any particular class, but for the purpose of fitting supply to demand, leaving the population to transfer itself according to convenience, and relying on the general effect of the policy for the improvement which might be expected to follow.

Every house should have a bath; bedroom accommodation sufficient to ensure the separation of the sexes; and a scullery in which to do the washing and other work. The aim should rather be to provide one large living room, than to include a parlour by cramping the more necessary department. Each house should be self-contained, and

the building scheme should provide for garden allotments, in the proportion likely to be required.

The chief difficulties in the way of carrying such a policy as I have indicated are the cost of land, and the dearness of money. As to the first of these the probability is that in the near future land may be purchasable by municipalities on less onerous conditions than at present; and if its valuation for rating purposes is to be an important element in fixing the price of land when it is required for public uses, and if also the right of compulsory purchase be accorded to the local authorities, the situation will be relieved as regards the land. The financial difficulty, also, would be materially lessened if State credit could be drawn on, as, for dealing with similar difficulties, it has been in Ireland. By applying to investments of this character the profits from trading concerns, part at least of the required capital could be provided. The land problem, however, is the most pressing, and the solution of that, as I have said, is to be found in the extension of the power of local authorities to acquire land on reasonable terms.

Were the amount of available accommodation increased by the building operations suggested, the standard of the city's requirements in regard to other property could be

raised. A register of houses should be made, beginning with the worst localities, and where the death-rate is highest. It would be found in most towns that a number of special cases would demand consideration, say, where dwellings were occupied by people, mostly aged, who could not be expected to live far from the centre of the town, and who, even if in a position to pay rent for them, had no need of four or five rooms.

I know no way of meeting such cases but by means of tenement dwellings, to which for ordinary family purposes I have the strongest possible objection; but I see no reason why the city itself should not erect them, on the best plans obtainable and in number sufficient to meet the needs of those whose earning capacity, owing to various causes, is small, and for whom large houses are unnecessary.

It is possible to build small tenements, with a through air current and proper sanitary arrangements, to let at similar rents to those previously paid for slum dwellings, by the people for whom they are intended.

The public authority could proceed to deal with existing property when the facts with regard to it had been ascertained. First, cellar dwellings should be closed, then other houses unfit for occupation. Powers could

be sought to enable the public authorities to compel limitation of the number of occupants of each house by stipulating for a minimum air space for each person, and separate conveniences could be insisted on where considered advisable.

If Parliament would render a little assistance by amending and simplifying Part II. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, small purchases of property could be made, and rearrangements carried out, effecting great changes at little cost.

These two lines of action followed as a set policy would speedily improve on present conditions without giving any section of the people just cause of complaint, and the death-rate would be lowered considerably, as previous experience has shown to be the case when clearance schemes have been put into operation under Part I. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

It may be asked why the making of further schemes under Part I. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act is not suggested. As a matter of fact Socialists do often suggest that course, but only because, at present, there is no other way; the choice now, in actual practice, lying between taking action under Part I. of the Act, or doing absolutely nothing.

The influence of property owners on public

bodies is still too strong to allow extensive building schemes to be carried out by the municipal authority, and it is scarcely possible to secure the demolition of houses after they have been closed under any powers possessed by a Corporation except those contained in Part I. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

If, however, action is taken under Part I. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, the Local Government Board insists on the supplying of new houses and the demolition of the old; otherwise Part I. is cumbersome in operation, and can only be regarded as, for the present, a necessary evil.

I have, so far, made no reference to the necessity for municipal lodging-houses, but something must be said about them, as the privately owned ones now in use are, in many ways, exceedingly costly to the public. I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that were there no common lodging-houses under private ownership and management, there would be no reason to fear epidemics of small-pox. The part played in the spreading of that disease by the lodging-house population is notorious, and even were some small financial loss incurred by the provision in all towns of municipal lodging-houses, the final gain

would far outweigh such loss. Personal cleanliness could be enforced, and the lodgers prevented from spreading infection, were all such establishments under public management.

## CHAPTER X

### POVERTY, CHARITY, AND POOR RELIEF

“THE poor ye have always with ye” is a phrase which bears different construction according as you look at it. There is a sense in which it is literally and powerfully true, but there is also another in which it is not so. If we think of the poor as some section of the population whose material needs cannot be met, even when in health, except by the charity of others to whom they must look in patient expectation, then the Socialist emphatically denies the assertion that the poor must always be with us. The productive capacity of society is now so great that none need want and all are able to earn their livelihood and more, except where they are prevented from doing so by sickness, infirmity, or by the existence of laws and customs which the individual cannot himself, acting alone, remove. The Socialist seeks to persuade the public to remove the laws and customs referred to—laws and customs which enable

a few to possess and control the productive forces of the world whilst they deny to others any access to the means of life—and replace them with better ones.

In the meantime, however, the poor are with us everywhere, and they have a claim against Society which differs entirely from that of any previous age. In ages gone by, when means of communication were few, large masses of human beings were occasionally thrown into poverty and famine through causes beyond their control. The explanation was simple and complete: there was not enough food to go round. But now the case is different; children are hungry whilst there is food in plenty in the sight of all. People are ill clad when the warehouses are full, and the workers are being told that they have made too much clothing. The maker of boots can make them so quickly that he gluts the market before he has had the opportunity of earning enough money to buy boots for his children, his wife and himself.

When production begins to be carried on for use instead of for profit, as is the case now, that part of man-made poverty can be extirpated, but until then what is to be done? What is being done? The mass of weltering poverty is everywhere around us. Its existence cannot be denied, and no elaborate statistics are required to prove the extent of

it. A list of wages paid in the various industries, and a simple statement as to the cost of the bare necessities of a household in the matter of food and clothing, is all that one requires in proof of the fact that no inconsiderable proportion of the inhabitants of every town and city in the United Kingdom are unable to command food, clothing, and shelter to meet their requirements even when they are in work. When out of work, or when sickness or other misfortune overtakes them, their case is deplorable. When a portion of the small income is wasted on drink the poverty itself is aggravated, and other consequences of a demoralising character are added.

The Socialist is frequently in conflict with the temperance reformer as to the relation between poverty and drink, but it is often through misunderstanding. Because the Socialist denies that the economic effect of the drinking habits of the people are what the temperance reformer says they are, he is represented as being opposed to temperance reform and looked upon as too weak to acknowledge the truth. The Socialist does not deny that poor people often make their poverty more acute by wasting money on drink and other things. The Socialist does not deny that, apart from the waste of money referred to, it is a greater calamity for members of the

working class to become victims of excessive drinking habits than it is for the upper classes to give way to the same habits.

Observe, I said a greater calamity—it is no greater fault. Why is it a greater calamity? Chiefly because the present social system can never be changed unless the working man changes it himself, and for this he must have a clear head and a stout heart, neither of which he can have if the drinking habit enslaves him. Then, too, the presence of the lust for drink in a poor man's home generally adds dirt and squalor to the poverty; and, furthermore, the general effect of drink and poverty combined is to make the poor, so far as they are under the influence of both, blindly indifferent to their own true welfare and render them unable to make any sustained effort to secure their own social and economic freedom. In so far as the temperance reformer bases his appeal on reasons such as are here mentioned it is impossible to gainsay him, but when he insults the poor by telling them that they are poor because they drink he fails to convince, but instead raises prejudice and animosity towards himself and his gospel.

This is not the place to say how the drink problem would be dealt with if the Socialists were in a position to determine public policy in the matter; the opportunity of making a statement on that subject will come later.

What I want now to make clear, so far as I am able within the space I can afford for the purpose, is the Socialist attitude towards the agencies at present at work on the poverty problem in every town and city, and the probable action which Socialists would take if they were placed in a position of responsibility for dealing with the situation as it exists to-day.

Of course, as I have already said, the Socialist believes that there would be no poverty problem if industry were organised on Socialist lines; but that cannot be until great changes are effected that will take a long series of years to accomplish. Land, railways and mines will have to be nationalised, one industry after another will have to be taken over by the public, either as State or municipal concerns. In the meantime some 2,000,000 families are compelled to exist on earnings of less than £1 a week, and every change in the industrial mechanism, an improved process of manufacture, the success of a foreign nation in the competition for world markets, mad speculation on the part of capitalists, the presence of insolvent firms floating like derelict ships on the sea of commerce until it suits the convenience of the banks, to whom they are indebted, to sink them—these and other features of modern capitalism bring disaster in the shape of unemployment

to thousands of willing workers who must in consequence starve or exist on poor law relief or charity.

It is the custom now to shirk the obvious duty of alleviating the suffering to which innocent persons are exposed by the warring elements of the industrial chaos miscalled a system. Society does not go to the length of denying its responsibilities altogether, but it dishonestly evades them under cover of the poor law and voluntary charity. Under the poor law it pretends that every destitute person can obtain relief, but it imposes conditions which in point of fact prevent the majority of self-respecting poor from accepting it. Many die of slow starvation rather than bear the stigma which is deliberately fastened on the individual who becomes officially branded as a pauper.

Under the poor law system society keeps its test-house, called a workhouse by some, a bastille by others, and it offers its hospitality there rather in the way of a deterrent than in good faith. Nobody accepts an offer of the workhouse until he is broken either in health or spirit. The food in the workhouse is better in quality, and more liberally supplied than that to which those who refuse it have been accustomed to even in their days of comparative affluence. Why, then, is it refused? How is it that nothing but moral or physical

human wreckage is to be found in the work-houses of the country? It is that there is

“Nothing to bring them joy, to make them weep,  
The day itself is like the night, asleep.”

Except for its influence in preventing applications for relief, which is what it exists for, unfortunately, there is no need for a workhouse system at all. With few exceptions the men and women to be found in a workhouse and who are classed in the returns as able-bodied, are not able-bodied at all. The returns take no account of mental or physical weakness short of actual breakdown in either case. The rest are able-bodied if they are under sixty years of age. The Socialist would recognise the facts and abolish the workhouse. Aged persons, if they could be safely left in their own houses, or could be housed with friends or relatives, should be given adequate out relief. If that is not possible, homes and attendance should be provided, but not in a workhouse.

It is already recognised that a workhouse is no place for children, and at present it appears best to place such as have no parents, or whose parents are not fit to train them, in homes of not more than six or eight under the care of a foster mother. Some day when the fear of want has been expelled from the mind of every willing worker, married, but childless people will more readily adopt children, and it

may well come to pass that no child shall fail to find home and affection like in character to that enjoyed by other children. If in addition to the aged and young being provided for as I have described, the unemployed are also separately dealt with as they should be, the rest of the inmates of workhouses are almost entirely hospital cases and ought to be recognised as such.

## CHAPTER XI

### HOSPITALS

THE mind of the country is so clearly settled in favour of a national scheme for the provision of old-age pensions, that one may be excused the necessity of contemplating the possibility of local provision in lieu thereof. There remains, therefore, with regard to the aged, from the city authority's standpoint, only the consideration of what to do for those aged persons who are unable to take care of themselves, and who have no relatives or friends to look after them. For these cottage homes should be provided, and arrangements made for such occasional or regular service as the circumstances require.

The extension of the children's home system mentioned in the last chapter would not in these days be difficult, for the necessity of accepting full communal responsibility for the rearing of orphan children, and children who are less fortunate than orphans, is no longer disputed.

As to the treatment of the sick poor, there

is a serious difference of opinion between Socialists and others, not, I admit, on the question of whether provision should be made, but as to how it should be made. The present method, which has the approval of the bulk of the charitable public as well as that of all who are opposed to Socialist methods, is a dual one. There is the poor law hospital, with its "stigma," for the destitute, and the hospital provided by voluntary subscriptions for others.

As a rule admission to the voluntary hospital is obtained on the recommendation of a subscriber to the hospital funds, and generally no evidence as to the means of those who are admitted for treatment is required. The result is that the really destitute poor who are most in need of free treatment, and who fail to discover some important individual who has a recommendation to dispose of, go to the poor law hospital and get the "stigma," whilst some others, who can afford to pay, go to the voluntary hospital and get none.

The charitable hospitals are used as training schools for medical students, and, to put it mildly, there is no security against their being improperly used for that purpose. In some cases also funds subscribed by the public for the support of hospitals are applied to meet the expenses of medical schools attached to the hospitals.

The annual income of the various voluntary hospitals in the United Kingdom was estimated by Mulhall to be £1,200,000 in 1898, and over the expenditure of this enormous sum there is no real public control. Heavy expenses are incurred in merely collecting subscriptions, and whilst many members of the public subscribe liberally, according to their means, others who can well afford to subscribe, but who are too avaricious to do so, escape payment altogether. Devices of various kinds are adopted to secure donations, and though it is argued that the virtues of charity and sacrifice are promoted by maintaining hospitals on the voluntary principle, most of the income is due to no such motive, and some of it is obtained by influences which amount virtually to a form of taxation. Foremen and managers in mills and workshops, are prevailed upon to collect money from the workpeople under them when the wages are being paid, and women and girls are induced to patrol the streets in London and elsewhere on certain days in the year shaking collection-boxes in front of the passenger, who, if patronising several, must refuse the rest in self-defence. In the railway stations you are invited to drop a penny in the slot and keep the hospitals going for a second, and at the station refreshment bar you see "Johnnies" wagering coppers as a sort of mild excitement, and incidentally for the

benefit of the hospitals. The Socialists, if they could get the public to agree with them, would put the whole of the hospitals under civic control. They would arrange for the doctors to be honestly paid for their services, so as to render unnecessary those side considerations which without doubt play an important part in determining the connection between charitable hospitals and the medical profession. The number of student practitioners would be strictly limited, and each one would have to be separately trained and superintended during his earlier efforts. Until the time comes when the medical profession will be willing to enter into the regular service of the community and draw their stipend for keeping people well, and not alone for tending them when they are ill, as is the case now, some discrimination is necessary in affording free treatment in public hospitals. Such discrimination, however, will never be effective until the hospitals are brought under public control, as the Socialists are wishful of doing at the earliest opportunity. When they are taken over by the public, rich and poor may be treated; those who can afford to pay, can be charged for services rendered, and the net cost of the whole hospital system will then be borne by all according to their ability to pay. Even under the present system of levying rates it would be more equitable to lay a rate for hospitals than to allow the

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niggardly and mean citizens to escape paying as they do now. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet expenses by voluntary offerings, and sooner or later the financial strain will break the present system down.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE UNEMPLOYED

THE census returns show that in 1901 there were 294,000 fewer labourers employed on the land in Great Britain than in 1881. Only 16,000 short of a million were employed in 1881, and the decrease represents a percentage of nearly 30. It is not possible to say how many individuals were driven from the land into the towns by the decrease referred to, but in all probability the number, inclusive of women and children, would be over a million. In the same period no less than 2,000,000 acres of arable land in Great Britain was put under grass. In all other trades than that of agriculture the acute periods of unemployment are the result of violent fluctuations and displacements of labour. In agriculture, however, the decline has been continuous over a long series of years, and if we agree, as I think we must, that agriculture should be the most important industry in the State, then it is obvious that

the restoration of agriculture to its normal position is one of the things necessary for the solution of the problem of unemployment.

It is generally understood that the decline of agriculture began when rapid and cheap transit facilities brought the produce of the immense area of grain-growing lands of America and elsewhere into competition with unprotected home produce. The experience of other countries, however, such as Denmark for instance, proves conclusively that land—no better than our own—can be profitably utilised under the new conditions if the situation is thoughtfully faced with enterprise and determination. Prince Kropotkin in his book, "Fields, Factories, and Workshops," shows how relatively poor is the use made of English land compared with that of France and Belgium, and what enormous possibilities there are in the application of intensive culture.

The agricultural problem in Great Britain is complicated by the land-owning system, under which the use of some land is restricted in the interest of sport, and the rent of other land is partially ruled by other circumstances than that of its use value. More important than the last-named difficulty, however, is the insufficiency of capital employed by the cultivator, and this in its turn is to some extent

due to the insecurity under which the cultivator works when at any time he may have his rent raised against him or receive notice to quit.

The measures necessary for dealing with the above matters affecting the land question belong to the sphere of national policy, and consequently—except that it is necessary to name the more important of them—they lie outside the scope of this book. Suffice it to say for the present that—in the case of land as in all other social necessities—so long as land is held under a system of personal possession, the purpose to which the owner applies it will be liable to conflict with the public interest; hence the Socialist advocates land nationalisation. Also that the kind of technical education most required in this country is that relating to agriculture; and that, both in the matter of agricultural education and research, as well as in the greater schemes of land purchase, afforestation, and the provision of better houses in rural districts, State funds will have to be used before anything really important can be accomplished.

The principle of State interference has already been acted upon in Ireland, though the plan followed was economically unsound, because it took the form of allowing tenants to buy their holdings, with the assistance

of State credit and State subsidies, at exorbitant prices, which the State would not have paid for its own purposes. The point I wish to make, however, is this: that advances have been made to the extent of some £110,000,000; grants amounting to nearly a million and a quarter; and annual subsidies have been voted of nearly a million, for dealing with problems in Ireland, similar to those which demand immediate attention in Great Britain.

Leaving the above considerations and coming to the question of unemployment in the industrial centres, which is a matter of more immediate concern to the municipal authorities, we find, unfortunately, that no problem to which municipal authorities can set their hands is so difficult to deal with. In this I agree with the remark of Mr. Chiozza Money, M.P., that "we shall find no remedy for unemployment short of the control by the community of the work of the community." The truth of the remark cannot be doubted by those who have witnessed the transference of private concerns to the public. The tramway companies which have been superseded by the various municipal corporations were in the habit of working their employees seventy to eighty hours a week, and, being in business solely for profit, they always refused—as they do now in towns where

they still operate—to extend their system save where a good profitable business was assured to them. The very first thing that a city must do when it takes over such a system is to reduce the excessive hours; if it hesitated public opinion would operate directly. The next step is invariably an extension of the service into districts where a private company would decline to go for fear of not being able to maintain its dividend. In Bradford, in three years, from the time the city acquired the tramway undertaking, the number of employees was increased threefold—1040 men were employed where only 340 had been employed before. Every city and every large town employs a considerable number of uniformed officers; 3000 is by no means uncommon.

The tailoring trade is a season trade, but so far as the number of men required to provide the uniforms of all public servants is concerned it need not be in the least irregular. The requirements are known beforehand, and the requisite number of tailors could be employed by the city; and for them, at any rate, there would be no more periods of unemployment. If similar action were taken by all the large public authorities, and by the State, it would have a far more important effect than would appear on first consideration.

"The control by the community of the work of the community" is, in the opinion of Socialists, as it is that of Mr. Money, the only remedy for unemployment. A state of society in which "individuals make bargains with individuals with a view not to service but to profit," and every other consideration is left to take care of itself, must inevitably result in some being over-worked and underpaid, as Mr. Money says, but the work of redress proceeds slowly, and in the meantime the unemployed are with us and they cannot wait. Whatever the cost may be they cannot honestly be ignored.

The Socialist acknowledges the right of the unemployed to have the opportunity to work given to him—and the unemployed woman too. If a Socialist majority had the responsibility of governing a city, they would take steps at once to place themselves in a position to meet their obligations to the unemployed. Precisely what those steps would be it is impossible to say, but one thing is certain that they would, acting under the best expert advice available, select some considerable piece of land, either already in the possession of the city, or that could be acquired by purchase, which, being either laid idle or used wastefully, needed human labour; on that land, under proper guidance, they would

offer the opportunity to labour to such as required it, and as the land was reclaimed for its most useful purpose they would provide for its permanent occupation and continued use.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WAY TO THE IDEAL

IN a brilliant series of five short chapters Mr. H. G. Wells has recently preached the gospel of Socialism, with the one word "boots" for his text. The inequalities of society, and the possibility of its better organisation under a system of production for use instead of for profit, find visible and dramatic expression in the fit and condition of the boots people wear; and, at the close of his last chapter, he draws a pathetic figure of a "poor pretty child's body in ungainly rags, and, on her feet, big broken-down boots that hurt her . . . her wretched sticks of legs, and the limp of her feet; and all those phantom owners and profit-takers . . . they are there about her martyrdom, leech-like clinging to her as she goes" . . . upon which picture he observes, "I want to change all that; and I do not care greatly what has to go in the process; do you?"

It may seem strange, following on the matter-of-fact account of the immediate

objects for which Socialists are working in the city life of to-day, and the difficulties they meet with while moving onwards ever so slowly; but I, too, have a talisman, and it is just a similar girl-figure, boots and all—save that mine has a dilapidated square carpet-bag hung from her left arm—she is following a cart full of coals which a broken-down old horse is pulling over the granite pavement in a northern city called Bradford—a city famous for the number of self-made millionaires that used to live within sight of their own factory chimneys, and who are said to have made Bradford what it is. She is gleaning the coal as it chances to fall when the cart jolts over the hard, uneven granite setts; but she is not alone, for near her ambles a bedabbled woman with a tin pail, a couple of boys as ragged as the girl herself, and, like the makers of Bradford (the ugly parts of it), who competed for their millions, she, too, is competing for a bit of fire in the household grate in a wretched slum on a cold damp day.

Influenced by pictures such as the one I have described, the Socialist seeks to establish the Socialist City, where there will be bread for all, work for all, and no fireless grates; but he finds that neither by tongue nor pen can he light the fire of hope, or touch the imagination of the stunted victims of competitive industry, whilst they remain

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sunk in their sordid poverty; so he must needs work his passage to the Socialist City by means of municipal trading, housing reform, municipal coal, municipal milk supply, and—education.

THE END

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